

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 USBERL 01110 01 OF 03 101505Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01
OMB-01 /105 W
-----060545 101729Z /42

R 101325Z MAY 78
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6805
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 3 USBERLIN 1110

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, WB
SUBJECT: STOBBE DRAWS BALANCE AFTER ONE YEAR

REF: USBERLIN 1025

SUMMARY: AT PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 27 GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE DREW POSITIVE BALANCE FOR HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. STOBBE POINTED TO RENEWED POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE IN THE CITY, EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITHIN THE SPD-FDP COALITION, THE ELIMINATION OF CONFLICT BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT OVER MAJOR BERLIN ISSUES ("BERLIN POLITIK"), THE RENEWED VITALITY OF HIS OWN SPD, AND THE BEGINNING OF A SUCCESSFUL DIALOGUE WITH THE CITY'S POPULACE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS TIME IN OFFICE. STOBBE ALSO CALLED UPON ALL PARTIES TO USE THE MARCH 1979 LANDTAG ELECTIONS AS AN "ELECTION DAY" FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AS WELL. STOBBE SAW NO LIKELIHOOD FOR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EAST ON SPECIFIC BERLIN ISSUES,

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USBERL 01110 01 OF 03 101505Z

BUT REMAINED HOPEFUL THAT THE CLIMATE WOULD IMPROVE.

END SUMMARY

1. IN A LONG-PLANNED PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 27 BERLIN GOVERNING MAYOR DIETRICH STOBBE DREW (NOT UNEXPECTEDLY) A POSITIVE BALANCE FOR HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE.

ALTHOUGH IT HAD BEEN EXPECTED THAT STOBBE WOULD POINT SPECIFICALLY TO HIS SUCCESS IN RESOLVING MAJOR PROBLEMS INHERITED FROM HIS PREDECESSOR, KLAUS SCHUETZ,(I.E. THE STEGLITZER KREISEL, INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS CENTER, ENERGY SUPPLY AND MISMANAGEMENT OF CITY-OWNED ENTERPRISES), STOBBE PROVIDED REPORTERS WITH A FOUR-PAGE CLOSELY TYPED LIST OF SENAT DECISIONS REACHED OVER THE PAST YEAR LEAVING FOR THE REPORTERS THEMSELVES TO DETERMINE WHICH WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT. BY SO DOING, STOBBE AVOIDED GIVING THE OPPOSITION SPECIFIC POINTS TO DISPUTE, AND INDIRECTLY ANSWERED A CLAIM REPEATEDLY MADE BY THE OPPOSITION CDU THAT STOBBE'S SENAT HAS DONE NOTHING CONCRETE TO DATE TO IMPROVE MATTERS IN THE CITY.

2. STOBBE DID LIST, HOWEVER, SEVERAL BRAOD AREAS IN WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ACTIVE AND HAS, IN HIS OPINION, WORKED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS. STOBBE CLAIMED SUCCESS FOR HAVING ELIMINATED FURTHER POLARIZATION OF VIEWS ON "BERLIN POLITIK" BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION CDU AND GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTIES THROUGH THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THREE-PARTY TALKS. COMMENT: STOBBE SHOWED MORE THAN A LITTLE BIT OF GALL HERE, SINCE HE HAD FOUGHT AGAINST THE THREE-PARTY TALKS FROM THE OUTSET, AND AGREED TO THEM ONLY UNDER THE GREATEST PRESSURE FROM THE FDP AND CDU. THAT HAVING BEEN SAID, THE DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN TONING DOWN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 USBERL 01110 01 OF 03 101505Z

DIVISIVE PUBLIC DISPUTES ON SIGNIFICANT ISSUES INVOLVING THE STATUS OF BERLIN AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE FRG. END COMMENT). UNFORTUNATELY THE HARMONY CREATED BY THE THREE-PARTY TALKS DISINTEGRATED SCARCELY SIX HOURS AFTER STOBBE'S PRESS CONFERENCE WHEN FDP CHAIRMAN WOLFGANG LUEDER TOOK PERSONAL OFFENSE TO CHARGES MADE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEBATE BY THE CDU LEADERSHIP THAT LUEDER WAS ENGAGED IN "POPULAR FRONT" POLITICAL TACTICS TO MAINTAIN HIS APPEAL WITH THE RADICAL LEFT WING OF THE FDP. AS A CONSEQUENCE, LUEDER WALKED OUT ON THE NEXT SCHEDULED ROUND OF THE THREE-PARTY TALKS AND AGREED TO REJOIN THEM ONLY ON THE CONDITION THAT THE CDU RETRACT ITS STATEMENTS. UP TO NOW, THE CDU HAS REFUSED TO DO SO.

3. LOOKING OVER THE POLITICAL SITUATION, STOBBE SAID FLATLY WITHOUT QUALIFICATION THAT THE BERLIN SPD-FDP COALITION IS OPERATING WELL. BOTH SIDES WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM. ALTHOUGH THEY ARE INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTIES, STOBBE SAID, NEITHER SUCCUMBS UNDULY TO THE TEMPTATION OF SEEKING TO BUILD ITS OWN PROFILE AT THE EXPENSE OF GOOD GOVERNMENT FOR BERLIN. THIS CLOSE COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE IS, IN STOBBE'S MIND, THE FUNDAMENTAL CRITERION FOR THE CON-

TINUATION OF THE PRESENT COALITION.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01110 02 OF 03 101521Z

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 USBERLIN 1110

4. HIS OWN POLITICAL PARTY, THE SPD, IS IN STOBBE'S OPINION, ONCE AGAIN IN ASCENDANCY IN BERLIN. THE LOCAL CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS FOR NEXT YEAR'S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND, HAPPILY, WAS NOT MARKED AS IN PAST YEARS BY THE DIVISIVE LEFT-RIGHT QUARREL. A YEAR AGO, STOBBE POINTED OUT, THE SPD WAS COMPLETELY ABSORBED WITH ITS OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS, STEWING IN ITS OWN MISERIES AND WONDERING ABOUT ITS OWN SURVIVAL. ALL THAT IS PAST NOW, STOBBE STATED. THE BERLIN SPD, REGENERATED FROM WITHIN, IS ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE MAJOR ISSUES CONFRONTING THE CITY AS A VITAL PARTY SHOULD.

5. THE BERLIN CDU, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS BEEN UNABLE TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE NEW SENAT. ALL THE CDU CAN OFFER, STOBBE TOLD HIS AUDIENCE, IS "OLD SLOGANS, OLD PROGRAMS AND AN OLD LINE-UP." THIS, STOBBE TAUNTED, IS "TOO LITTLE FOR BERLIN."

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USBERL 01110 02 OF 03 101521Z

6. ON A DIFFERENT POLITICAL THEME, STOBBE CALLED UPON BERLIN'S THREE POLITICAL PARTIES TO NAME THEIR CANDIDATES FOR THE BERLIN SEATS IN THE EC PARLIAMENT WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE MARCH BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION. BY PRESENTING THEIR CANDIDATES THEN, STOBBE ARGUED, BERLIN'S POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD OFFER THE CITY'S VOTERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR PREFERENCE IN MARCH 1979 NOT ONLY FOR THE NEW BERLIN HOUSE AND GOVERNING MAYOR, BUT ALSO FOR THE CANDIDATES TO THE EC PARLIAMENT WHO WOULD BE CHOSEN BY INDIRECT ELECTION BY THE BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AS PART OF THE EC PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORAL PROCEDURE IN THE SUMMER OF 1979. (COMMENT: STOBBE'S PROPOSAL FOR NAMING EC PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES PRIOR TO THE BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTION WAS ADMITTEDLY A CALCULATED MANEUVER ON HIS PART TO EMBARRASS CDU OPPOSITION LEADER PETER LORENZ WHO, IT IS KNOWN, WOULD LIKE TO GO TO THE EC PARLIAMENT SHOULD HE FAIL IN HIS THIRD ATTEMPT TO BECOME GOVERNING MAYOR.)

7. WITH OBVIOUS PRIDE STOBBE TOLD THE ASSEMBLED JOURNALISTS THAT A NEW STYLE AND A NEW POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE PREVAILS IN THE CITY TODAY. THERE ARE BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE AVERAGE CITIZEN (BUERGERFREUNDLICHKEIT), AND SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY AND THE TRADE UNIONS POINT TOWARDS A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR THE CITY'S ECONOMY. BERLIN'S SELF-IMAGE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE, STOBBE CONCLUDED, IS AT A HIGH POINT. COMMENT: STOBBE'S ASSESSMENT OF THE UPBEAT ATMOSPHERE WHICH PREVAILS IN BERLIN TODAY (WHEN COMPARED TO THE MISERY AND GLOOM WHICH HUNG OVER THE CITY A YEAR AGO), IS ECHOED IN THE FRG AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS ALMOST WEEKLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 USBERL 01110 02 OF 03 101521Z

CLAUS MENZEL SUMMED UP THE "STOBBE PHENOMENON" IN THE APRIL 30 SONNTAGSBLATT: "THE MINOR MIRACLE OF BERLIN; STOBBE AND HIS TEAM HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE; PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AGAIN ON THE SPREE."

8. ADDRESSING SPECIFIC BERLIN ISSUES WHICH MUST BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE GDR, STOBBE EXPRESSED RESTRAINED HOPE THAT THE SUEDGELAENDE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE CONCLUDED THIS SUMMER. HE CHARACTERIZED THE STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE REOPENING OF THE TELTOW CANAL, THE PURCHASE OF THE "DUCK BILL" AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR IMPROVING FURTHER VISITS ARRANGEMENTS TO THE GDR AND EAST BERLIN AS BEING "IN A STATE OF STAGNATION."

9. ASKED BY A REPORTER AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS PRESENTATION WHETHER HE FELT THAT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE REPRESENTED THE BEGINNING OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, STOBBE REPLIED LACONICALLY: "WAHLKAMPF IST IMMER."

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 USBERL 01110 03 OF 03 101535Z
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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 USBERLIN 1110

10. COMMENT: STOBBE IS RIGHTLY PROUD OF THE RESULTS OF HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. HE HAS PUT THE CITY BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK. THERE IS A CONVICTION IN THE CITY, WHICH FINDS EXPRESSION IN THE LOCAL, FRG AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH ALL EXCEPT DEVOTED CDU SUPPORTERS, THAT THE CITY IS ONCE AGAIN BEING "GOVERNED" INSTEAD OF SIMPLY BEING "ADMINISTERED," -- PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS. IN ADDITION, STOBBE'S SPD IS SHOWING RENEWED INNER VITALITY AND A REMARKABLE DEGREE OF COHESION. TRUE, THE COALITION SHOWS MORE SIGNS OF STRAIN THAN STOBBE WOULD LIKE TO ADMIT IN PUBLIC. (HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY, WHEN FDP CHAIRMAN LUEDER ISN'T TAKING ISSUE IN THE PRESS WITH ONE POSITION OR ANOTHER TAKEN BY SPD SENATORS IN THE SENAT.) THESE DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, ARE NOT CRUCIAL; THEY REPRESENT, DESPITE STOBBE'S STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY (PARA 3 ABOVE), AN EFFORT BY THE FDP TO ESTABLISH ITS OWN VOTER PROFILE. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE BALANCE,

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USBERL 01110 03 OF 03 101535Z

AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF BERLIN'S ECONOMIC SITUATION WOULD HAVE TO NOTE THAT UNEMPLOYMENT HERE REMAINS ALMOST ONE PERCENTAGE POINT HIGHER, THE RATE OF INVESTMENT IS LOWER, AND THE CITY'S GROWTH IN REAL ECONOMIC TERMS SLOWER THAN IN THE FRG. THE SITUATION AT BERLIN'S UNIVERSITIES, THOUGH CONSIDERABLY QUIETER, LARGELY DUE TO THE OPENNESS AND HARD WORK OF SENATOR PETER GLOTZ, IS STILL NOT ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY. INTERNAL SECURITY (LAW AND ORDER) IS, ACCORDING TO OPINION POLLS, WORRY NUMBER ONE IN THE BERLIN POPULACE, AND APPARENTLY THERE IS A FEELING THAT MORE MUST BE DONE TO PROTECT THE AVERAGE CITIZEN FROM STREET CRIME, BURGLARIES AND THE LIKE. IN SHORT, WHILE STOBBE HAS ACCOMPLISHED A GREAT DEAL IN THIS FIRST YEAR, A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE HERE AS IN ANY CITY, AND AN APPRECIABLE NUMBER OF BERLIN'S VOTERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT STOBBE AND THE SPD HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. FOR THAT REASON, DESPITE HIS VERY HIGH PUBLIC IDENTITY RATING (98 PERCENT) AND VERY FAVORABLE PERSONAL POPULARITY (ALL POLLS PUT IT AT WELL OVER 50 PERCENT), WERE AN ELECTION HELD TODAY, IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE SPD WOULD BE UNABLE TO WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AND WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CONTINUE IN COALITION WITH THE FDP. THE LIKELIHOOD OF A CDU VICTORY, WIDELY DISCUSSED A YEAR AGO, IS VERY REMOTE, HOWEVER. GEORGE

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